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Robert Lenox, Esq.r
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The Author.

DR. MILLER'S

SERMON:

DELIVERED AT

The Installation

OF

THE REVEREND JOHN BRECKINRIDGE,

IN THE

CITY OF BALTIMORE;

October 13, 1826.

CHRISTIAN WEAPONS NOT CARNAL, BUT SPIRITUAL:

A

SERMON,

DELIVERED IN THE

SECOND PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH,

IN THE CITY OF BALTIMORE,

OCTOBER 13, 1826;

AT

The Installation

OF

THE REVEREND JOHN BRECKINRIDGE,

AS COLLEAGUE WITH THE

REVEREND JOHN GLENDY, D. D.

IN THE PASTORAL CHARGE OF THE SAID CHURCH.

BY SAMUEL MILLER, D. D.

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PRINCETON PRESS.

PRINTED BY D. A. BORRENSTEIN.

1826.

BDG. NO. 2410

LENOX LIBRARY
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TO

THE REVEREND SENIOR PASTOR,

AND THE MEMBERS

OF THE

SECOND PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH,

IN THE CITY OF BALTIMORE,

THE FOLLOWING SERMON,

PUBLISHED AT THEIR REQUEST,

IS, WITH FERVENT WISHES AND PRAYERS FOR THEIR

TRUEST PROSPERITY,

MOST RESPECTFULLY AND AFFECTIONATELY

DEDICATED, BY

THE AUTHOR.

CHRISTIAN WEAPONS NOT CARNAL, BUT SPIRITUAL:

A SERMON.

2 CORINTHIANS X. 4.

FOR THE WEAPONS OF OUR WARFARE ARE NOT CARNAL, BUT MIGHTY THROUGH GOD TO THE PULLING DOWN OF STRONG HOLDS.

As long as man retained his primitive innocence, he loved truth, and was ever ready to give it a cordial welcome. But the moment he fell from God and from holiness, truth became painful, and, of course, odious to him. He felt that he could no longer listen to it as a friend, speaking peace; but must henceforth regard it as an enemy, which could deliver no other than a hostile message. Accordingly, when we read that the holy and happy tenants of *Eden* had become rebels by eating the interdicted fruit, the next thing we read of is, that, on *hearing the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden, they hid themselves from the presence of the Lord among the trees of the garden. And the Lord called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou?*

And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, and I hid myself.

From that fatal hour, all efforts to impress moral and religious truth on the minds of men, have been, properly speaking, a WARFARE; that is, in whatever direction they have been applied, they have never failed to meet with *resistance.* As all men, by nature, hate *the truth as it is in Jesus;* and as all men, quite as universally, are opposed to the spirit and the demands of gospel obedience; it follows that all attempts to procure the reception of the one, or to enforce the practice of the other, must be made in the face of *hostility:* a hostility not, indeed, always equally bitter in its hatred, or gross in its violence; but still *real hostility,* which nothing can appease but a surrender of Jehovah's claims to the inclination of the rebellious creature. Hence, whenever the banner of truth and righteousness is raised in any place, opposition never fails immediately to arise: and however unreasonable its character, or revolting its aspect, in the view of the truly spiritual mind, it usually bears away the multitude, and would always do so, did not Divine power interpose to prevent it. The human heart, left to itself, is ever ready to bid welcome any plausible flatterer, who will "*prophecy deceits,*" and say, in the language of the first deceiver, "*Ye shall not surely die.*"

Of the truth of these remarks, we have a striking example in the history of the church of *Corinth.* The apostle *Paul* had laboured in the ministry of the Gospel in that city for a considerable time; and his labours had been crowned with success. Numbers were added to the professing people of God. Soon after he left them, however, a false teacher came among them, who appears, from various hints dropped by the apostle, to have been a man of honourable birth; of fine talents; of polished education; and of great skill in all the arts and refinements of Grecian eloquence. He was evidently, also, as such impostors commonly are, a man of lax principles; ever ready to accommodate his doctrines to the pride, the prejudices, and the corrupt passions of those whom he addressed. This artful deceiver, on the one hand, set himself with peculiar bitterness against the apostle; found fault with his birth and education; alleged that *his bodily presence was mean, and his speech contemptible;* and insinuated that he was really no apostle. On the other hand, he boasted much of his own origin, learning, eloquence, and other accomplishments, and endeavoured to persuade the people of *Corinth* that he was, in every respect, *Paul's* superiour.

Unhappily, the situation of the Corinthian church at this time was peculiarly favourable to the views

of such an impostor. In consequence of the surrounding wealth and luxury, and the remarkable exemption from persecution which it had for some time enjoyed; a large number of its members were deeply tinctured with a worldly spirit. In fact, the church there seems to have been full of professors who were far from having either the knowledge, the steadiness, or the spirituality which became them. No wonder, therefore, that this false teacher found admirers and followers. He raised a considerable party, which gave much trouble to the friends of truth, and which, for a time, threatened the peace, if not the existence of the church in that city.

The inspired apostle, in the passage of which our text makes a part, seems to be directly addressing this false teacher and his adherents, and repelling some of the insinuations which he had made against himself. In reply to the charges,—that he was destitute of the credentials of an apostle,—and that he had none of those decisive aud energetick means of resisting opposers, and supporting his authority, which they supposed a teacher sent from God ought to exhibit; the apostle declares,—*Though we walk in the flesh*, that is, though we inhabit mortal bodies, and are compassed about with fleshly infirmities;—*yet we do not war after the flesh*—or according to the flesh. *For the weapons of our warfare are not*

carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds.

In the passage of holy scripture before us, there are two points which demand our particular notice, viz.

I. The WEAPONS which the apostle employed, and to which alone he gave his sanction; and,

II. The GREAT EFFICACY of those weapons: they were MIGHTY THROUGH GOD.

I. Let us first contemplate the WEAPONS which the apostle speaks of himself as employing. *The weapons of our warfare are not carnal.*

The word *carnal* means *fleshly.* It is opposed in scripture to *spiritual* or *holy;* and is generally employed by the inspired writers to designate the principles of our depraved nature. Thus, when it is said, that *the carnal mind is enmity against God;** and that *to be carnally minded is death;*†—the language is evidently meant to express the dominion of that corrupt disposition which men bring with them into the world, and on which the sanctifying grace of God has not yet taken effect. Of course, by the phrase, *carnal weapons*, is meant, such weapons as our corrupt nature forms and furnishes. In other words, it is intended to designate all those means of recommending and propagating religion which the great Author of that religion has not prescribed,

* Romans viii. 7. † Romans viii. 6.

but which the wisdom of this world has invented. Such weapons have been employed in all ages. They are the favourite weapons of carnal men: or rather, they are the *only* weapons which such men are either qualified or disposed to employ. But they are not confined to carnal men. Even some of those who sincerely love the Saviour, may be, and have been, betrayed into the use of means for promoting his honour, which may well deserve to be styled *carnal*, and which, in themselves, are not the less carnal, or the less criminal, because they are employed by good men. In short, every method, of propagating truth, or of recommending duty, either real or supposed,—which unhallowed principles suggest, or unhallowed motives prompt, or which, in one word, is not in conformity with the Word and Spirit of God, may be pronounced a *carnal weapon*, the use of which our text indirectly, but most solemnly, forbids.

But it may not be unprofitable to specify, a little more in detail, some of those means which are frequently resorted to, for the professed purpose of propagating religion, and which evidently belong to the class proscribed by the apostle in the passage before us.

And at the head of the list, may be placed PERSECUTION, whether in its more gross and violent, or

in its more mitigated forms. By the former, you will readily understand to be meant all those cases in which the "secular arm" has interfered to enforce the claims of a particular religious denomination, or of a particular set of opinions, by fire and sword,—by fines and forfeitures,—by racks and chains, and banishment, and all the various penalties which oppressive governments, civil and ecclesiastical, have so often, and so grievously inflicted. By the latter are intended all that molestation, abuse, or temporal inconvenience, of whatever kind, which have been heaped upon men on account of their religious opinions. The narrative of these inflictions, and of the diabolical fury with which they have, in countless instances, been executed, forms one of the most melancholy chapters in the history of that which calls itself the Church of God. A narrative the more unspeakably revolting, from the fact, that the most shocking atrocities which it displays, were perpetrated in the name, and by the alleged authority, of a God of mercy, and from a professed regard to his glory! Before this enlightened audience I need not say, that persecution for conscience sake, in all its forms, is one of the greatest absurdities and abominations that ever disgraced the christian world:—that it is contrary to reason, to justice, and to humanity, and certainly not less contrary to the word of

God, and to all the radical principles of our holy religion.

To the same interdicted class of weapons, we may refer all CIVIL ESTABLISHMENTS OF RELIGION. Whatever may be their form, or the degree of their rigour: whether they are intended to operate by force, by fear, or by allurement: whether we consider them as a *tax on error*, or as *a bounty on faith;* as a legal provision for instructing the people in what the civil magistrate (who may be an infidel or a heretick) chooses to say is truth; or as a convenient engine in the hands of government, for reaching and controlling the popular mind: in all cases, they are unhallowed in their principles, and pernicious in their tendency: calculated to generate and encourage hypocrisy; to corrupt the christian ministry; to make the care of souls an affair of secular merchandise; and to prostrate the church of God, with all its officers and ordinances, at the feet of worldly politicians.

Again; all HUMAN INVENTIONS IN THE WORSHIP OF GOD are liable to the same general charge. The object of these, in every age, has been to consult *carnal prejudices*, and to accommodate *carnal feelings:* of course, they are *carnal weapons.* When, therefore, professing christians began, soon after the apostolick age, to introduce into the church rites

which the Saviour never instituted, for the purpose of assuaging the enmity, or conciliating the affections of Jews and Pagans: when they borrowed, from either or from both, without scruple, and without the smallest warrant, as they fancied an inducement—the smoking incense; the worshipping toward the East; the bowings; the adoration of images; the purgatorial fire; the merit of bodily maceration; the celibacy of the clergy; the splendid garments; the holy days; the exorcisms; the processions, and all the endless array of superstition; insomuch that, as early as the close of the fourth century, the venerable *Augustine* complained that, "For *one* institution of God's they had *ten* of man's, and that the presumptuous devices of men were more rigourously pressed than the Divine prescriptions;"—who can doubt that they were chargeable with employing *carnal weapons?* And when christian churches or individuals, at the present day, aim to allure the gay and the worldly, by pomp and splendour of ceremonial, by that studied address to the senses in the public service of the sanctuary, which the primitive and purest periods of christianity never knew; who can doubt that they also lay themselves open to the same charge? They undertake to be wiser than God; they employ means, which, however well intended, can result in nothing but mischief. The church has

no power to "decree rites and ceremonies." If she *had*, there would be no other bounds to the multiplication of them, than the ever varying, and ever teeming figments of human vanity or caprice. To *claim* such a right, is rebellion against her Master. To *exercise* it, is systematically to introduce superstition and complicated corruption into his sacred family.

Further; even Ecclesiastical Confessions and Formularies may be so perverted as to become *carnal weapons*. No one is a warmer friend to these summaries of gospel truth, properly understood, and in their proper place, than he who now addresses you. When they are faithfully drawn from the word of God; when they claim no authority but that which is founded on their conformity to that word; when they are imposed upon no man's conscience; but are honestly and simply employed for the purpose of excluding from the visible church those who are really enemies to her radical truth and order; then reason, scripture, and experience all bear witness in their favour. But when they are erected into an ultimate rule of faith; when they claim an inherent authority; when they are set above the Bible, or on a par with the Bible; when they are imposed on the consciences of men, as indispensable passports to the honours and emo-

luments of an established church; and even employed to ensnare the minds of unread and inexperienced youth, as a term of admission to literary privileges; then, instead of promoting truth, and cherishing piety, they are hostile to both. Instead of maintaining *the unity of the spirit in the bonds of peace and love*, they fetter the mind; they ensnare the conscience; they engender division and strife; they become instrumental in corrupting, rather than preserving *the simplicity that is in Christ.*

The next weapon, of this unhallowed class, which demands our notice, and which the faithful minister ought to reject, is the introduction of THE SUBTLETIES OF PHILOSOPHY into the simple doctrine of Christ. The religion of the Bible is one thing: *the philosophy of it*, is quite another. And although it is not always easy, and perhaps not necessary, or even proper, for a student of the Bible, in his closet, to banish from his mind every inquiry which encroaches on the *latter*; yet, in my opinion, it is the *former*, and the former *only*, which ought to be presented in preaching the gospel. And whenever the ambassador of Christ, instead of proclaiming the *simple gospel*, entertains his hearers, either in whole, or in part, with the refinements of philosophical speculation, with the presumptuous efforts of carnal reasoning, he is guilty of substituting something in

place of the gospel: he cheats them with chaff, instead of feeding them with Zion's provision.

Again; in close connexion with this, we may remark, that THE PRIDE AND OSTENTATION OF UNSANCTIFIED LEARNING, are *carnal weapons*, which have produced countless evils in the church of God. Genuine learning, and even profound learning, when united with vital piety, is an instrument in the propagation of religion, of inestimable value. To despise it, is at once to insult our reason, and the almighty Author of reason. To decry it, is one of those devices of Satan, by which he ensnares even good men into the service of his kingdom. But while all this may be confidently maintained, still nothing is more certain than that perverted learning, unsanctified learning, has been the means of turning millions away from the kingdom of Christ, rather than bringing them into it. It has been the means of inflating with pride; of corrupting truth; of leading ministers and others to rely upon intellectual attainments and efforts, rather than upon the Word and Spirit of the living God, to bring men to the knowledge and enjoyment of his glory.

No less liable to the same charge, is THE GENERAL IDOLATRY OF TALENT IN THE CHURCH, and especially all reliance on MERE HUMAN ELOQUENCE as a means of converting men to the belief and love of

the gospel. That God daily honours talents, and sometimes those of the most transcendant order, by using them for the extension of his kingdom, it is impossible to doubt. And when they are devoutly regarded as his instruments, and employed in humble reliance on his grace, as that which alone can render them truly useful, they are genuine christian weapons. But when they become objects of idolatrous worship and dependence, they lose their *christian* character, and degenerate into *carnal* weapons. And, in this case, there are probably none on which the great Head of the church is seen more frequently and more severely to frown. For *his glory He will not give to another.* Among these talents, perhaps Eloquence is the most ensnaring, because most rare, and most fascinating. No man who had either an intellect to perceive, or a heart capable of emotion, ever undervalued genuine eloquence. It is that unaffected, powerful utterance of thought and of feeling, which meets a response in every mind in which thought and feeling find a place. And yet, Eloquence itself, however genuine and perfect, can never change a single heart; and to rely upon its efficacy in persuading any man to be *reconciled to God*, is to rely upon a *carnal weapon.* Above all, does this appellation belong to the employment, in the kingdom of Christ, of those artificial refinements and

pomp of rhetorick; those *profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called;* that affectation and parade of oratory, which so often usurp the name of eloquence. *My preaching*, says the inspired author of our text, in another place—*was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the spirit and of power.* And again —*Christ sent me to preach the gospel, not with the wisdom of words, less the cross of Christ should be made of none effect.**

Nor can we, for a moment, hesitate to give the name of *carnal weapons*, to the "pious frauds," the refined cunning, dissimulation, and stratagem, the carnal policy, and all the crafty management, practised on men, for the alleged purpose of promoting their benefit. All these, even when viewed under the most favourable aspect, are liable to the general charge of *doing evil that good may come;* an abomination in the church of Christ, which has corrupted and disgraced it from the beginning; which is not the less abominable, however, because it is old; and of which the inspired apostle, in writing to the Romans, speaks in terms of the severest reprobation.† How often a disingenuous, crooked policy, calling itself *wisdom;* and a timid, temporizing, unfaithful course, disguised

* 1 Cor. ii. 4. i. 17. † Rom. iii. 8.

under the name of *prudence*, have been adopted, with temporary success, by ecclesiastical men, every student of history, and every observer of daily occurrences, has noticed and deplored. Yet they are really, as remote from true wisdom, as different from genuine christian prudence, as the basest counterfeit is from authorised coin.

All such weapons, the christian, and more particularly the christian minister, if he would partake of the spirit of Paul; if he would not disgrace *that worthy name by which he is called*, must abhor and avoid.

Thus far, my friends, according to the plan of the apostle, I have treated the subject *negatively*. I have told you what his weapons were *not*, and have given you a specimen of those which the spirit of our text forbids. *The weapons of our warfare*, says this enlightened and faithful minister of Jesus, speaking of himself and his brethren—*The weapons of our warfare are* NOT CARNAL. What kind of weapons, then, *did* they employ? For the answer to this question, we are not left to conjecture. We find ample instruction respecting it in our context, and in the other apostolick records.

Some, indeed, suppose that the apostle refers primarily and chiefly, in this passage, to the exercise of those *miraculous powers*, with which he and his

brother apostles were endowed; by means of which they were enabled, when they thought proper, to silence opposition, and effectually to display *that authority* which their Divine Master *had given them for edification and not for destruction.* Those who adopt this opinion, consider the apostle in our text as declaring, that the weapons which he wielded were not those of feeble flesh; but such miraculous, supernatural weapons, as his enemies could neither sustain nor resist, when he chose to put them forth. That there may be some reference here to miraculous gifts, is, perhaps, not improbable; but that they are *principally* intended, we can by no means admit. This appears to be conclusively decided by the strain of the verse immediately following our text. The weapons employed were such as were adapted, to *cast down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and to bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.* Now, obviously, the only weapons adapted to produce these spiritual effects, are spiritual weapons. Miraculous powers, we know, were not always connected with cordial subjection to Christ, even in those who possessed and exercised them; nor are they ever represented in Scripture as the means of effecting true sanctification in others. Spiritual weapons alone are God's ordinary means of

producing this blessed effect. These, then, are here chiefly intended by the apostle. Weapons addressed to the intellectual and moral part of our nature. Weapons which make their appeal to the reason and the heart of man. Weapons which depend for all their efficacy on the spirit and grace of God; and which are daily made *the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.*

The same apostle who penned our text, in the sixth chapter of his Epistle to the Ephesians, speaks at large of the christian *armour;* describing its several parts, and showing the use of each. In that place it served his purpose to speak *chiefly*, though not *exclusively*, of the christian's DEFENSIVE ARMOUR; such as the *girdle of truth*, the *breast-plate of righteousness*, the *shield of faith*, and the *helmet of salvation;* which belong to all believers. But in the passage before us, he had occasion to refer particularly to the weapons of CHRISTIAN MINISTERS, and more especially to those of the OFFENSIVE kind; or those which are important, not merely for the *protection* and *defence* of their own persons; but also for *attacking* and *vanquishing* the *enemies* of their Master. Even *these* weapons, however, are NOT CARNAL, but SPIRITUAL: not intended to injure, but to save; not to inflict violence on the persons of those to whom they are directed; but to enlighten,

to convince, to sanctify, to comfort, and lead to perfect and eternal blessedness. Let us take a cursory survey of some of these weapons, as we find them enumerated in the inspired volume.

And the first of these spiritual and potent weapons which I shall mention, is the WORD OF GOD; the Word of truth and grace contained in the Holy Scriptures. This holy Word, when applied by the Spirit of God, is indeed a powerful weapon. Hence, in the strong language of inspiration it is called the *rod of Jehovah's strength;* and in another place, it is represented as *the sword of the spirit;** and again, it is said to be *quick and powerful, and sharper than any two edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and to be a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.*† Again, *The entrance of this word,* we are told *giveth light; it converteth the soul; it maketh wise the simple; it rejoiceth the heart; it enlighteneth the eyes; it is able to make us wise unto salvation.*‡ Accordingly, this is the grand weapon on which the primitive ministers of Christ were directed to rely, under God, for extending his kingdom. *Go ye,* said the Master himself, *into all the world,*

* Ephesians, vi. 17. † Hebrews, iv. 12.
‡ Ps. cxix. 130. Ps. xix. 2 Tim. iii. 15.

and preach the gospel to every creature, And to this day, he who preaches the genuine word of God; that is, who preaches the Gospel—the simple, pure Gospel; without the admixture of carnal reasonings or vain philosophy; he who does this faithfully, fervently, and affectionately; does that which is much more likely to be effectual in extending the religion of Jesus Christ, in its power, than if he were to erect a thousand splendid temples for the solemnities of publick worship, or to found a thousand sumptuous benefices, for the temporal support of ecclesiasticks.

Another weapon, by means of which the ambassadors of Christ are bound to plead the cause and extend the reign of their Master, is THE RIGHT ADMINISTRATION OF THE SACRAMENTS which he has appointed. As the church is a body of professing people, called out from the world, and united under Christ, their only King and Head, there seems to be, upon every principle, a call for those badges and seals of the covenant under which they are constituted, by which we find that it has pleased their infinitely wise Sovereign actually to distinguish them. By means of these, among other things, a visible line of separation is drawn between the Church and the World. The visibly "precious," are separated from the "vile." The " sacramental host" of God's people are embo-

died and arrayed, in the sight of the enemy's camp; and an epitome of their religion, as it were, addressed to the senses of every beholder. These seals, therefore, the servants of Christ are commanded to administer to the end of the world. And by the enlightened and discriminating application of them, they employ, as long experience has proved, a gentle, but most potent weapon, not only for exciting, sustaining, and comforting the friends of their cause; but also for drawing multitudes from the hostile ranks, and enlisting them under the banner of the *Prince of peace.*

A further weapon, which Christ has been pleased to appoint by his authority, and to crown with his blessing, is THE HOLY DISCIPLINE OF THE CHURCH. By this is meant that system of regulation and correction, which infinite wisdom has established in his professing family, as one of the great means of promoting its purity and edification. A system which makes no pecuniary exactions; which resorts to no secular penalties; which neither sells nor gives "indulgences" to the systematick sinner; which invades no man's civil or religious rights; but which, by moral power alone, that is by instruction, by entreaty, by admonition, by rebuke, by warning, by suspension, and, in extreme cases, by exclusion from the visible church,—removes offences, vindicates the ho-

nour of Christ,—causes the wicked to fear,—and promotes the benefit of the offenders themselves. There can be no question, then, that the discipline of the church, when properly understood, and wisely conducted, may be made as really the means of convincing and converting sinners, and building up believers, as the faithful preaching of the Gospel. I know, indeed, that worldly men both dread and hate discipline. They are in the constant habit of considering and representing it, as mere "punishment;" as a "hard and tyrannical exercise of ecclesiastical authority." But I know, too, that the enlightened christian loves it. He regards it as one of the means of grace, and as a precious privilege. He knows, that if the church be a "garden," as the scriptures represent it,—"the garden of the Lord" —it must be defended by an *inclosure*; or else—to keep up the figure—every beast of the field would waste it. But a spiritual inclosure without discipline, would be an absurdity in terms, as well as contradictory to the Bible. The christian, then, who has learned to contemplate the professing family of Christ with the spirit of a disciple, regards the discipline of that family with peculiar interest. He is ready to say, even when the case becomes his own,—*Let the righteous smite me; it shall be a kindness; and let*

*him reprove me, it shall be an excellent oil.** Accordingly, in the very Epistle from which our text is taken, we have an account of a *case of discipline*, which the officers of the church of *Corinth* were *commanded* to exercise; which they *did* exercise; which was *blessed* to the benefit of him who was the subject of it; and after the beneficial operation of which, he was restored to the fellowship and privileges of the church.

Another of those weapons with which the ambassadors of Christ are to go forth to their warfare, is FERVENT, IMPORTUNATE PRAYER. Prayer for the pardon and salvation of the enemies of the church. Prayer for the success of all the means of grace. Prayer for the universal spread of the Gospel. Thus the same inspired apostle who penned our text, after elsewhere describing and recommending the whole christian armour, closes all by the exhortation—*Praying always, with all prayer and supplication, in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.* And, surely, if Divine aid be constantly necessary, and ought to be unceasingly implored, in the ordinary warfare, of which the apostle is here speaking; it cannot be less needful in the still more arduous warfare, in which those

* Psalm, cxli. 5.

whose office it is, to *win souls to Christ*, are daily engaged. While, therefore, every other prescribed weapon ought to be used with as much diligence, and indefatigable perseverance, as if all depended on the human agent; the Divine blessing should be continually invoked, with as much earnest importunity, as if means were excluded. Every plan should be formed with prayer; every effort nerved by prayer; every address, if I may so express it, inclosed in prayer; and every service followed by prayer.

I shall only mention one more of those spiritual weapons, by which the enemies of Christ are overcome, and his religion effectually propagated. I mean HOLY EXAMPLE. It was long ago enjoined by the Saviour himself—*Let your light shine before men, that others, seeing your good works, may glorify your Father in heaven.* And often, since that injunction was given, has the bright example of christian meekness, purity, humility, and benevolence, been the means of silencing the gainsayer; of extorting a reluctant homage from the infidel; and even of melting into cordial penitence and love the hardest heart. Many a man, who had resisted with apparent ease every other weapon, has been overcome by the power of embodied, living religion, and been constrained to confess with trembling—*Truly, this is the finger of God!* A distinguished unbeliever, of the last

century, after spending a few days at the residence of an eminently pious minister, was so deeply impressed with his pure, benevolent and heavenly conversation, that he said—"I must leave this house. If I remain here a day longer, I shall become a christian in spite of myself."

Such are the principal weapons which it becomes christian ministers to employ, and which we may confidently hope the great Head of the church will bless. For, says the apostle,

II. They are MIGHTY THROUGH GOD to the PULLING DOWN OF STRONG HOLDS. This is the second point demanding attention.

This form of expression plainly implies, that *carnal weapons* are NOT MIGHTY; that they are NOT POWERFUL to promote the great ends of overcoming the enemies of the cross, and extending the reign of pure and undefiled religion. And, accordingly, all testimony serves to shew that this is really the case: that for effecting these objects they are the most powerless imaginable. Racks, gibbets, the magistrate's sword, and "Acts of Uniformity," have made hypocrites by thousands; but they have never yet made a christian; and they never will or can make one, as long as the nature of man, and the kingdom of God retain their essential characters.

Let those who doubt this, recollect for a moment,

the nature of the STRONG HOLDS which christian ministers are commissioned to *pull down.* They are not those of *physical,* but of *moral* power. They are those of pride, unbelief, self-righteousness, love of the world, superstition, sensuality, and all that enmity to God, his truth, and his commandments, which every where characterize unsanctified men; together with all those vain pleas by which they are wont to excuse, if not justify themselves in their rebellious course. In these *strong holds,* the children of this world are, as it were, intrenched. And the success of the "good soldier of Jesus Christ," consists in *pulling down* their unhallowed fortifications, and constraining them to surrender themselves willing captives to the blessed Redeemer: or, as our context expresses it, in *casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.*

Such being the nature of the CONQUEST to be effected, it is perfectly manifest that *carnal weapons* are by no means adapted to accomplish the end. A free, unconstrained choice is essential to moral agency. Our Creator has made it the duty of every man to engage in his service, as matter of enlightened conviction, and deliberate, voluntary, cordial preference. If we were required to give a definition

of true religion, we should answer—"It is receiving and obeying the gospel in the love of it." Or, we should say, "It is voluntarily choosing, and heartily following Christ, as our Teacher, Redeemer, and Sovereign." But how can this be wrought in the mind, or enforced, by carnal weapons? Such weapons cannot, in the nature of things, reach the object. Men may, indeed, be constrained to perform certain *external acts*, by the dread of secular penalties, or by the hope of temporal rewards. But is this true religion? It may be policy, or hypocrisy, or priestcraft, or statecraft; but true religion it cannot be. The idea of *compelling* men to *believe*, or of *bribing* or *forcing* them to *love*, is, surely, in the very first rank of absurdities.

But further; the use of *carnal weapons*, for promoting religion, is not only, in its own nature, absurd and preposterous; but it is also an unhallowed attempt to usurp the authority of God. He alone is Lord of the conscience. To attempt, therefore, to tamper with it by secular weapons, or to apply means of *external coercion*, where the *devotion of the heart* is the service required,—is a presumptuous interference with the Divine prerogative. It is like endeavouring, by pillars of brass or marble, to prop up the heavens.

Nor is this all; the use of *carnal weapons*, in

moral and spiritual concerns, is not only absurd and impious; but experience has shown that they can never answer the end which those who employ them profess to seek. They have invariably proved themselves to be worse than useless in promoting the cause of genuine christianity. The moment they began to be used for promoting the spread of the gospel, its lustre began to be dimmed, and its power to decline. Men found that when they employed unhallowed means to fill the house of God, they seldom failed, by those very means, to empty it. I grant, indeed, that power, and wealth, and splendid civil establishments, may appear to be effectual, for a time, in building up what many suppose to be, and call, Religion. They may multiply and adorn gorgeous edifices for worship; they may found rich endowments for enabling ecclesiasticks to live in luxury; they may impart to all the outward accommodations and ceremonial of religion, an imposing magnificence; and they may allure multitudes of the affluent and the learned into the church, and many a graceless votary of ambition into the sacred ministry. But this is not promoting real religion. It is, in truth, pursuing a course directly calculated to destroy it. When christianity, in primitive times, had nothing to depend upon, under God, but her *moral* power, that is, the simplest

moral means; THEN, in the midst of persecution, she made a progress, and displayed a power more astonishing to the contemplative heathen, than the most signal miracles of her inspired ministers. They saw the servants of Christ, going forth, without the least aid from the great ones of the earth; nay, in direct opposition to all the wealth, the power, and the superstition of the world. They saw them bearing no fleshly weapons; nothing but the simple gospel of the grace of God, *to the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Greeks foolishness.* Yet they saw this simple weapon triumphant over all that flesh and blood could oppose to it. They saw the religion of Christ making its way in spite of the allurements of sense, the frowns of power, and the fires of martyrdom. They saw it converting the blood-thirsty savage, into a model of clemency and benevolence; transforming the hardened blasphemer into a devout worshipper, and the bitter persecutor into a zealous apostle of *that faith which once he destroyed;* making the abandoned voluptuary temperate and pure; the fraudulent, just; the avaricious, charitable; the passionate, meek and placable; and the proud infidel, an humble suppliant for pardon through that *blood which cleanseth from all sin.* THEN the *word of the Lord had free course and was glorified.* THEN *multitudes were added to the*

church of such as were saved. THEN the churches, blessed with an humble, spiritual, and devoted ministry, and *walking together in the fear of the Lord, and in the consolations of the Holy Ghost*, were edified and comforted. In short, THEN the church probably held a more exalted station with regard to *vital piety;* the holy flame of faith, and love, and spiritual obedience, rose higher and shone brighter, than at any period since that time. But whenever *carnal weapons* began to interpose:—when imperial power and splendour began to take the side of the church; when emperors began to invite ecclesiasticks to their courts, and to load them with emoluments and honours; when the doctrines and claims of the church began to be enforced by civil penalties; when a pampered priesthood began to exhaust their ingenuity in rendering the publick service a gaudy and dazzling ritual:—from that hour, real religion declined. The fire of love and zeal was extinguished. Ministers, in a great degree, lost their spirituality. The mass of the people soon became like their teachers. And the church, instead of continuing to be that holy, spiritual body which she once was, became a splendid, rich, corrupt, worldly church, over which, while the gay and ambitious rejoiced, the truly pious were constrained to mourn.

And in all cases in which the same simple spirit-

ual weapons, which wrought such moral miracles in the primitive church, have been faithfully employed, the same blessed results have been invariably, in a greater or less degree, manifested. Yes, brethren, wherever and whenever the same weapons, which in the hands of the primitive ministers of Christ, were so powerful, are honestly and diligently wielded, in the same spirit as by those devoted men; they, will assuredly be found, as then, *mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds.* The proudest columns of the enemy, however apparently formidable, will melt away before them. I will not, indeed, undertake to define the measure of success, which will attend the ministry of him who faithfully, consistently and constantly plies the genuine weapons of the gospel. I cannot assert that success is the *natural effect* of fidelity; for I know that without the blessed power of God, it will not follow the very best endeavours. Nor can I venture to pronounce, that success will be, in all cases, in exact *proportion* to fidelity; for I recollect that God is a Sovereign. But I have no doubt, at the same time, that all scripture, and all experience warrant us in laying it down, with confidence, as a general principle, that eminent personal holiness and official fidelity in ministers of the gospel, will usually be found connected with eminent success in *winning souls to Christ.*

It can by no means, indeed, be maintained, that, whenever a revival of religion occurs, and the *strong holds* of sin and satan are *pulled down*, it follows of course, that the minister who is instrumental in this work, is himself, certainly, a pious man, and his weapons all purely spiritual. A man who is utterly graceless, may be made, in the dispensations of a sovereign God, instrumental, in imparting grace to others. But my position is, that where his spirit, his life and his weapons are all, in a good measure, such as they ought to be, he will not fail of being successful. I repeat it, brethren, if a minister of the gospel will, simply, humbly, wisely, steadily, affectionately, and perseveringly, employ those weapons of which the apostle speaks, and, at the same time, honour God, by unfeignedly looking to Him alone to make them effectual; I could as soon doubt that Jehovah has made promises to his church, and that He will be faithful to what He has said, as doubt that a revival of his work, and a display of his glory, will be in a greater or less degree, the blessed result.

It appears to me that the whole history of the church confirms this position. In what part of christendom was there *ever* an enlightened, spiritual, exemplary, faithful ministry at work, without many visible and precious seals to its fidelity? Even when apparent exceptions have occurred, have they

not proved, on examination, to be rather apparent than real? A preacher, indeed, may declare the truth in its purity every time he opens his mouth; and yet he may do it in so cold, pointless, and uninteresting a manner, that no rational man could expect him to make an impression. Or, he may preach the truth, and do it with inimitable force, fervour and skill; and, at the same time, out of the pulpit, manifest so little of the christian spirit, and, perhaps even so much of the opposite spirit, as to counteract all his publick labours. Or, he may be faithful as a preacher, and exemplary as a man; and yet be so habitually indolent, as entirely to neglect the *children* of his charge, and by no means to follow up, by his efforts *from house to house*, what he may have begun in the sanctuary. Can it be wonderful, or is it in the least degree adverse to what seems to be the spirit of our text, that such men have little or no success? It is only where the weapons in question are, *all* of them, honestly, consistently, and with some tolerable degree of diligence, employed, that we have a right to anticipate the plenary blessing. If, in such case, there has ever been a failure of the blessing, it is more than has ever come to my knowledge, or, as I verily believe, to the knowledge of any other man.

But we are reminded by our text, that this happy

result, whenever it occurs, is not *of* man, or *by* man; but all of God. *Mighty* THROUGH GOD, says the apostle, *to the pulling down of strong holds.* That is, *the weapons of our warfare* do not produce their effect in virtue of their own natural energy, or in virtue of the wisdom or power of us who wield them; but they are mighty through that God whose power works by them. *Not by might, nor by power*—that is, by *human* might or power, but by MY SPIRIT, saith Jehovah.* *We have this treasure*—the treasure of the gospel—says the apostle—*in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be* seen to be *of God, and not of us.*† Even when the inspired *Paul planted,* and the eloquent *Apollos watered, God gave the increase. So then, neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth, but God that giveth the increase.*‡

The foregoing illustration of the spirit of our text, suggests to us a variety of practical inferences, to some of which, allow me, before I close, to solicit your serious attention: and,

I. The principles laid down seem to me instructive as to the question, what, and how far christians, AS CHRISTIANS, HAVE TO DO WITH CIVIL GOVERNMENT.

The kingdom of Christ is not of this world. And

* Zechariah iv. 6. † 2 Cor. iv. 7. ‡ 1 Cor. iii. 7.

if all *carnal weapons* are prohibited in promoting the extension, and in conducting the affairs of this kingdom; then it is evident that the civil magistrate, as such, has no right to interpose in the affairs of the church, either with his sword or his regulations; that he has no right either to reward or to punish men for their religious opinions, in any case or way whatever. Man is accountable to God alone for his religious creed, and his religious practice. As long as he disturbs not the peace of society, no one has a right to call him to an account for either. But, on the other hand, to say, as some have done, that christians have nothing to do with civil government, is to say, that, in *becoming christians*, they *cease to be men;* and that the Bible contains no instructions or precepts applicable to christians as members of civil society. The church, and the states or kingdoms of this world, are entirely separate governments. Neither can ever be subjected to the other, as such, without mischief. But the members of *both* being, in many cases, *the same;* and the laws of Christ extending to all the relations and duties of men; it can, in no case, be strictly said, either that christians have nothing to do with politicks, or that the magistrate has nothing to do with religion. Every christian, indeed, ought to recoil, with instinctive dread and horror, from every attempt on the

part of civil government to interpose in the affairs of the church, EVEN TO HELP HER. As members of the church of Christ, we *need* no other help, we *wish* no other, than to enjoy an EQUAL PROTECTION WITH OTHERS IN ALL OUR CIVIL RIGHTS. Nay, we deprecate the thought of more than this. When more is attempted, there is death in the unhallowed touch;—not merely to one of the parties, as in the case of *Uzzah* of old; but, I had almost said, to both; and to both it certainly would be, if it were possible even for the *gates of hell to prevail* against the Church. Truly, we ought to be jealous of every thing which brings civil government into contact with the church. Rather, much rather, let the church have the *frowns* than the *caresses* of the world. There is far less evil to be apprehended from the former than from the latter. Yet, while we say this, it is nevertheless true, on the one hand that every civil magistrate ought to be a christian, to love the church, and to seek to promote her interests: and, on the other, that every christian ought to be a vigilant and active patriot, loving his country, and endeavouring to secure her welfare continually, by faithfully discharging all the duties of a good citizen. That man ill, indeed, estimates or discharges the duty which he owes to Him who is *Head over all things for the Church*, who acts upon

the principle, that he has no concern with the civil government under which he lives; and who deliberately abandons the elective franchise, the hall of legislation, and the court of justice, to the enemies of his Saviour. Instead of this, let him faithfully attend, according to the call of Providence, on every civil, as well as ecclesiastical duty; being careful, to whichever of them he addresses himself, to employ no other weapons,—to take no other course, than those which BECOME HIM AS A CHRISTIAN.

2. We may learn from this subject the true ideas that ought to be annexed to what are called THE RIGHTS OF CONSCIENCE;—the RIGHTS OF PRIVATE JUDGMENT.

There cannot be a plainer principle than that the rights of conscience are inalienable. No man has a right, if he could, to force my conscience; nor have I a right to force that of any other man. Nay, strictly speaking, the thing is impossible. I may coerce his body; I may tamper with his conscience; I may tempt it, and even corrupt it; but *coerce* it, I cannot. The very term *conscience*, implies that *internal conviction*, which it is physically impossible for one man either to form, or to controul, for another. But while we admit, nay strenuously maintain, the sacredness of the rights of conscience; is it any violation of those rights, for the Church to

exclude any man from her communion for heresy or immorality? Certainly not. There is a striking analogy, in this respect, between religious and civil concerns, which may serve to illustrate the subject. Every man, for example, has an undoubted right to dispose of his own property as he pleases. That is, no human power has a right to controul him in this matter, as long as he does not invade the peace of society. Yet if he spend his property in degrading licentiousness, and prodigality, every soberminded person will consider him as sinning both against God, and against society. And if he go to a certain length in this course, though the law of the land may not take hold of him, he must not be surprized or complain, if all decent people drop his acquaintance, and decline receiving him into their families. In vain will he appeal to the publick, and say that this treatment is *persecution;* for that he has a perfect right to regulate his own expenditures as he thinks proper. True; and his neighbours have the same unquestionable right to bestow their respect and countenance on whom they please, and to withdraw them from whom and when they please. So it is in spiritual concerns. All men, undoubtedly, have a right to believe what doctrines they choose, and to embrace what form of religion they choose. God forbid that this right should ever be called in

question; or ever, for one moment, assailed with *carnal weapons.* But the church, which is an assemblage of individuals, must have the same right to judge whether she can agree with another individual in opinion, and walk with him in fellowship, or not. Of course, if any man connected with the church become corrupt, either in principle or practise, he surely has no reason to complain if the church admonish and entreat him as a brother; and, if he persist in his unhallowed course, if she withdraw from him, and disown him. For if it be a violation of the rights of conscience, for the church, in such case, to withdraw from *him;* then it is an equal violation of the rights of conscience, for an *individual* to withdraw from a *corrupt and apostate church,* with which he has on the best grounds, become disgusted, and with which he can no longer worship in comfort. And thus, acting on the principle which some contend for, instead of the rights of conscience being maintained, all real enjoyment of those rights would be banished from the world. No individual, or body of men whatever would have a right to choose their religious principles or connections for themselves!

3. The principles involved in our text plainly teach us, that it is wrong to vindicate any doctrine, or any practise, merely on the ground of HUMAN AU-

THORITY. If good men have used *carnal weapons*, we may allow them to have been good men; but we must not imitate them, or be governed by their authority, in that which was manifestly contrary to the spirit of the gospel. This is one of the principal ways in which error has obtained currency, and even the most zealous support, and sometimes from those who verily thought they were thereby *doing God service*. The inspired *Paul*, in writing to the very church to which our text is directed, warns it against referring to human names, when the great principles of duty are in question. To some who had said, *I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas, and I of Christ*, he makes the solemn appeal—*Was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?—Call no man master*, my friends, *one is your master, even Christ*. What though *Origen* was a pious man, and the most eminently learned and ingenious divine of his age; and what though *Augustine* was, perhaps, the most illustrious name for sound theology, erudition, zeal, spirituality, and usefulnes, in the annals of the church, from the second to the sixteenth century? Yet, when the former gave himself up so unworthily to allegorizing dreams, and philosophical speculations; and when the latter, amidst all his pre-eminent worth, yielded to so many of the popular super-

stitions of the day; we must by no means attempt to justify all that they taught. What though *Luther, Calvin, and Cranmer* were inestimably precious men, and worthy of being held in everlasting remembrance; the *first*, for a piety, holy courage, and decision of character, for which the whole christian world ought ever be thankful; the *second*, for a depth of penetration, a soundness of judgment, an extent of learning, and an ardour of zeal for Christ, which the friends of the Redeemer's kingdom are bound to remember, to the end of time, with the deepest veneration; and the *third*, for a pious devotedness and fidelity which should never be alluded to by a dutiful son of the reformed church, without some epithet of honour? Yet when *Luther* indulged in irascible passion, and permitted almost all his polemical writings to be tarnished with opprobrious language: when *Calvin's* name and influence were implicated in the burning of a heretick; and when *Cranmer* took a still more immediate and active part in burning at least four persons for their religious belief; let us not attempt their justification. Their error, indeed,—I speak more particularly of the error of the two latter,—was rather that of the *age*, than peculiarly of the *men*; for the rights of conscience were then understood by none. Still they erred—greatly erred. They used *carnal wea-*

pons; and, for this are, of course, to be censured, not imitated. Again I say, my friends, we are not to be governed by *human authority.* As Protestants, as disciples of Christ, the BIBLE is, to us, the ONLY INFALLIBLE RULE OF FAITH AND PRACTISE. The first, and grand question for us to ask, therefore, is, not—whether "any of the rulers have believed" a certain doctrine, or adopted a certain course? Not, whether this or that distinguished man, has embraced a particular opinion? Not even, how the Church has decided respecting it; but—*What saith the scripture?* Let the Word of God be our rule; let it furnish all the *weapons* we employ; and we may confidently look for a blessing.

4. We may learn from this subject, in what consists THAT SUCCESS IN HIS OFFICIAL WORK, which a minister of the gospel ought to desire and seek. Not in merely collecting and attaching to his person, a large and admiring congregation. Not in making his own learning, talents, and accomplishments, the objects of popular applause and idolatry. Not even in filling the church with multitudes of decent professors. A minister may attain all these, in as high a degree as man ever did; and yet, in the most important sense, be wholly without success in his ministerial work. The most precious kind of success;

that which he ought to desire, and to pray for without ceasing, consists in his ministry being blessed to the conversion of sinners; in *pulling down the strong holds* of enmity and disobedience in which they are intrenched; in drawing them away from their infatuated connection with sin and satan, and all that is corrupting and degrading in their subjection to both; in leading them to a vital union and obedience to the Saviour: in short, in bringing the impenitent to the true knowledge and love of the gospel, and in building up believers in faith and holiness unto salvation. THIS is the SUCCESS for which a gospel minister should look, and labour, and pray, and nothing short of which ought ever to satisfy him.

I grant, indeed, that an enlightened and faithful gospel ministry, may be, and constantly *is*, productive of many *subordinate effects*, which are of great value in society. It tends to advance the interests of general knowledge in the world. It promotes order, polish, and decorum in social intercourse. It makes better members of the society of men on earth, thousands and millions who will never be prepared for *the inheritance of the saints in light.* But still, the higher effects which I have mentioned, are the great and most blessed constituents of success. Where *they* are never attained, the most important ends of the ministry of reconciliation are never at-

tained. And where this is the case, even the subordinate benefits of which I have spoken, generally fail in a corresponding degree.

5. We learn, from the spirit of our text, WHAT MINISTER IS MOST LIKELY TO BE SUCCESSFUL in his ministerial work. Not, by any means, as a matter of course, he who is the most learned divine. Not he who dwells most, in his publick or private instruction, on the *philosophy* of religion. Not, in all cases, the most eloquent preacher. Not he who is most confident of success. Not he who feels most self-complacency in the contemplation and prospect of success. But HE is most likely to be successful in his ministerial work, who himself most cordially loves the gospel; who enters most deeply into its power and sweetness, as a matter of practical experience; who preaches it most simply, intelligently, earnestly and affectionately; who prays most fervently for the manifestation of its saving power; and who exemplifies its benign effects most uniformly in his own temper and life. THAT MAN may hope for a blessing on his ministry. SUCH A MAN, I will venture to say, never failed of being favoured with *times of refreshing and revival from the presence of the Lord.* In short, if the faithful minister *can* have, and *ought* to have no other influence than that which is of a MORAL KIND; if MORAL

WEAPONS are the ONLY weapons which he ought to attempt to wield; then it is plain, that he who displays, both in speech and action, the largest portion of *moral truth*, *moral beauty*, and *moral glory*, will be most likely to exert that happy moral influence, which of all others, is most desirable and precious. This is a kind of exertion, which, when genuine, was never lost. And, as long as God is faithful, he who is *steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord*, will find that *his labour is not in vain in the Lord.* On the other hand, that minister who expects to have a particle of salutary influence in the world, beyond his own solid *moral worth*, and *moral influence*; in other words, beyond the degree in which he preaches the Saviour's truth, and manifests the Saviour's loveliness, in his own spirit and practise, will be likely to be most egregiously disappointed. There is a power in consistent holiness, which belongs to nothing else beneath the throne of God.

6. Our text affords many important suggestions to the young Servant of Christ, who is about, to-day, to be constituted a Pastor of this church.

My dear Son, both the language and the spirit of the text admonish you, that your ministerial work, if you be faithful in it, will be found a continual WARFARE; a *warfare* against all that is hostile in the

heart of man to the pure gospel of Christ; a warfare against pride, and unbelief, and appetite, and passion, and avarice, and selfishness, and *all that exalteth itself against God* and holiness. Whether you have respect to your own heart, or the hearts of others, every inch of ground that is gained, from conversion to glorification, is to be gained by FIGHTING. Go forth, then, to your work, with the spirit of a "soldier;" expecting to fight; willing to fight; and confidently anticipating the victory. Not, indeed, anticipating it, as a celebrated young Reformer, in the beginning of his course, did; who felt as if the force of his preaching *must* bear down all opposition; but who was afterwards constrained to confess, that "old *Adam* was too strong for young *Melancthon*." Let *your* anticipations be rather founded on the mighty power of God, and on the promise of his grace to those who employ with fidelity the armour which Himself has furnished.

But our text further admonishes you, in this warfare, TO BEWARE OF THE WEAPONS YOU EMPLOY. As to the weapons of *persecution*, of *secular penalty* in any form, I bless God that they are equally precluded, by your own disposition, and by the political charters under which it has pleased him mercifully to cast our lot. But think not that these are the only weapons interdicted by your Master. Beware

of carnal wisdom, carnal passion, carnal reasoning, carnal prudence, carnal management, carnal substitutes of any kind, for those simple, spiritua weapons which Jehovah hath authorized. Never attempt to promote religion by any other methods than those which the Word of God warrants. Go not forth with *Saul's* armour; but with the simple *sling and stone* with which it becomes the *good soldier of Jesus Christ* to meet those who *defy the armies of the living God.* The great Head of the church has not authorized you, or any other minister, to *lord it over the consciences of men,* or to hurt a hair of any man's head on account of his religious belief. The only means intrusted to you are *moral means.* You are called, to *beseech men, by the meekness and gentleness of Christ, to be reconciled to God;* to instruct them, to persuade them, to entreat them, to pray for them, and to win them by the lustre of your example. These alone are your weapons. Whatever form of opposition you may be called to encounter, never think of employing any other. Employ these, however, with indefatigable diligence. *Whether men will hear, or whether they will forbear,* follow them, with your instructions, your entreaties, and your prayers, meekly and patiently, to your latest breath. And even if some, in the bitterness of their hostility, should be prompted to oppose you with

personal violence; (in supposing this possible, I, of course, refer to none in this congregation) say, with the illustrious heathen chief, "Strike, but hear me!" or rather, with One greater than any mortal champion—*Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!*

While on the subject of the *weapons* you employ, allow me again to put you on your guard, in preaching the gospel, against substituting the refinements of philosophical speculation, for the plainness and simplicity of Bible truth. The latter is adapted to every capacity; is suited to every age, clime, and state of society; and is never truly presented, without beneficial effects. The former, is often little better than a caricature of the gospel; and, in many cases, is much more fitted to make scepticks and infidels, than to bring men to sit, as little children, at the feet of Jesus. The history of religion in our own country, presents many an instructive lesson on this subject. Learn wisdom from those lessons. If you wish your preaching to be most useful, let it be as much as possible conformed to the apostolic model. If you are bound as to the *matter*, why not equally as to the *manner*, *to preach the preaching which your Master bids you?*

And while our text warns you against the use of unhallowed weapons, it reminds you where your re-

liance ought constantly to be placed for success in your work. When *David* went forth to meet the proud Philistine, he said, in reply to his insolent defiance, *I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel.* Such ought to be the language and the dependence of every minister of religion, in going forth to his warfare. There can scarcely be a more unpromising appearance than to see him who undertakes to fight the *battles of the Lord*, confident in an arm of flesh, and relying on the potency of his own efforts. Very different was the spirit of the apostle *Paul. When I am weak*, said he, *then am I strong.* Plainly implying, than when he was most sensible of his own weakness, and most completely divested of all reliance on himself; he enjoyed the firmest confidence in divine aid, and the most comfortable anticipations of ultimate victory.

Thou, therefore, my Son, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Be of good courage; for the battle is his; and he will never send you a warfaring on your own charges. We shall all look with the deepest interest, to the result of your labours in this place. You are about to be connected with one of the most important Congregations on this hill of Zion; and to be united with a venerable Colleague, whose age and experience will enable

him to give you many a valuable lesson, and with whom it will be your privilege to labour as a son with a father. Our prayer is, that the Captain of salvation may gird you with strength, and inspire you with wisdom; and that the ecclesiastical relation which is this day formed, may be productive of lasting comfort, and an abundant blessing.

7. Finally; our text furnishes matter of serious address to the members of this Congregation, who are this day to receive a collegiate pastor.

You have heard that it becomes ministers to employ no other than spiritual weapons, in their warfare with human corruption. If so, it becomes those to whom they minister, to be *workers together with them*, and, as far as possible, to alleviate all the burdens and dangers of their warfare. If your pastors will be bound to labour and pray without ceasing, for the spiritual welfare of yourselves, and your children; can it be necessary to employ arguments to show that you ought to encourage and aid them in the most interesting of all work on this side of heaven? In addressing *you*, my respected Friends, I am persuaded that argument is not necessary. As the only weapons they will ever think of employing, will be of a spiritual kind; so these are precisely those in reference to which it will be most in your power to help them. You can help them much by

yielding yourselves to God, as those who are alive from the dead; much by your prayers; much by early and faithfully *training up your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord*; much by diligently and consistently maintaining family religion; much by exhibiting a bright example of christian holiness in all your temper and practise. In all these ways, you may hold up their hands, and impart a joy to their spirits, which none but faithful ministers can adequately feel.

Remember, too, my dearly beloved brethren, that *you* also, as well as your ministers, if you are christians, are engaged in a *warfare*, each one for himself, against sin and satan, and all the powers of error and wickedness. In this warfare, never forget, that spiritual weapons alone can avail you any thing. If you desire to mortify corruption, to resist temptation, to overcome the world, and to grow in grace, rely not upon human inventions or strength to accomplish the work. Imagine not that spiritual maladies can ever be reached by carnal weapons; or that real sanctification is ever likely to be promoted by observances which God never appointed. But be unceasingly diligent in the use of all those spiritual means, which the great Author of salvation has instituted, and which alone we have reason to expect he will bless. Look to Him. Let *his word dwell*

in you richly, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding. Abound in prayer. Make new and daily application, by faith, to *that blood which cleanseth from all sin.* Let the *love of Christ constrain you* to affectionate and holy obedience. Let all his ordinances be precious. *Put on the whole armour of God. Fight the good fight of faith. Quit you like men; be strong.*

Soon will the solemnities of this day, with all their momentous results, pass in review before a higher tribunal than that which is now assembled in the house of God. Then *the Chief Shepherd shall appear*, to take an account of his servants, and of those to whom they have ministered. There you and your children must meet these *under shepherds*, and answer for the use which you shall have made of their labours for your benefit. O, may it be to every one present a meeting replete with joy and with glory! AMEN!

SEP 10 1963